



# what's up?

## What's it all about?

Adolescent nutrition is both an important and complicated issue. The rate of growth in adolescence is second only to the rate in infancy. Poor eating habits during the teen years may lead to both short- and long-term health consequences including obesity, osteoporosis, and sexual maturation delays. Take a look below for some suggestions to help teens get the foods they need.

## What are the details?

- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that most teen diets do not meet minimum recommendations because they lack grains, dairy, fruit and vegetables.
- A fourth of all vegetables eaten by teens nationally are in the form of french fries.
- Teens often do not eat enough food with iron, calcium, riboflavin, thiamin and vitamins A and C.

According to the 2002 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey:

- Only about 1-in-4 8th graders and 1-in-5 10th and 12th graders report that they eat fruits and vegetables 5 or more times a day.
- More than a quarter of adolescents in 8th, 10th and 12th grade report drinking two or more sodas a day.
- About a quarter of Washington adolescents are overweight or at risk for becoming overweight.
- About 35% to 40% of students surveyed indicate that they are trying to lose weight. From 10% to 12% of 8th, 10th and 12th graders also report that they had fasted, taken diet medications without a doctor's advice, vomited or taken laxatives to lose weight.
- Nearly a third of 8th graders and about half of 12th graders say that they do not usually eat dinner with their families.

## nutrition

## INFORMATION FOR ADULTS WHO CARE ABOUT TEENS

### Why does it matter?

- Too little food or the wrong food can affect sexual maturation and growth.
- Normal bone strength may never be reached and healthy teeth may not develop if a youth doesn't get enough calcium.
- Poor dietary habits are related to obesity, osteoporosis, heart disease and diabetes.
- Studies have shown that heart disease can begin in childhood and progress into adulthood.
- Over-eating, under-eating and eating disorders can have devastating health impacts.
- Because each teen may be at a different phase of growth, a "one size fits all" approach to nutrition doesn't always work. Adults need to be aware of a teen's growth, and support healthy eating habits.
- Teens should eat frequent healthy meals and healthy snacks. Eating breakfast has been shown to help teens be more alert at school and perform better in sports activities.



## NUTRITION

### INFORMATION FOR ADULTS WHO CARE ABOUT TEENS

#### What can I do?

As parents and adults who care about teens:

- Make healthy choices available and easy. Ask teens what they are willing to try.
- Breakfast: Set the table the night before. Hand your teen a smoothie on the way out the door—just blend fruits and real fruit juice, milk, low-fat frozen yogurt and protein powder or tofu.
- Dinner: Eat together with your teens. Be a role model for good eating habits. It's a great time for conversation, too.
- Encourage eating fruits, vegetables and high fiber foods, such as whole grain breads and cereals.
- Teach teens to read food labels so they know what they are or aren't eating!
- Praise good choices and actions.
- Watch out for eating empty calories in front of the TV.
- Limit eating of "saturated fats" found in cheeseburgers, ice cream and pizza.
- Keep low fat snacks on hand, such as microwave popcorn, dried fruit, pretzels, peeled carrots, and juice.
- Encourage exercise. The CDC recommends 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day, at least 10 minutes at a time, 5 days a week.
- Be a role model for physical activity and healthy eating.
- Make sure teens get enough calcium—3 servings a day of milk, yogurt or cheese (1200 milligrams/day). Use 1% or nonfat products to lower saturated fat intake.
- If you have concerns that a teen might have an eating disorder, seek help from a doctor who specializes in treating eating disorders.

#### What are the guidelines?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of Health and Human Services, and the Food and Drug Administration have published dietary guidelines. Do you follow these? Do the teens in your life?

- Eat a variety of foods.
- Balance the food you eat with physical activity—maintain a healthy weight.
- Choose a diet with plenty of grain products, vegetables and fruit.
- Choose a diet low in saturated fat, trans fatty acids and cholesterol.
- Choose a diet low in salt and sodium.
- Choose a diet moderate in sugars.
- Children and adolescents should not drink alcoholic beverages.

A teen's food needs vary depending on growth rate, degree of maturation, body make-up, physical activity and health status. The dietary guidelines give a range for the number of servings from each of the food groups. An active growing teenage boy or girl would need the upper range of servings, while a not-so-active teen who is not having a growth spurt would need the lower range of servings.

- Vegetables: 3 to 5 servings.
- Fruits: 2 to 4 servings.
- Breads, cereals, rice and pasta: 6 to 11 servings.
- Milk, yogurt and cheese: 2 to 3 servings.  
Teens should have 3 or more servings of foods rich in calcium.
- Meats, poultry, fish, dried beans and peas, eggs and nuts: 2 to 3 servings.

**hot  
links!**

Washington State Department of Health  
DOH Pub 910-117 11/2003  
[www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov)

Resources listed here are provided as a public service and do not imply endorsement by the State of Washington.

References for source materials are available from the Child and Adolescent Health program, 360-236-3547.

For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. Please call 1-800-525-0127.

**Food and Drug Administration** [www.fda.gov/fdac/reprints/ots\\_nutr.html](http://www.fda.gov/fdac/reprints/ots_nutr.html)

On the Teen Scene: Good News About Good Nutrition

**National Women's Health Information Center** [www.4woman.gov/BodyImage/Bodywise/bodywise.htm](http://www.4woman.gov/BodyImage/Bodywise/bodywise.htm)

Go to "Learn About Nutrition. Eat Right!"

**KidsHealth** [www.kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition\\_fit/index.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_fit/index.html)

Doctor-approved nutrition information for parents, children, and adolescents

**Adolescent Nutrition** <http://faculty.washington.edu/jrees/adolescentnutrition.html>

University of Washington Maternal and Child Health Program

**Bright Futures** [www.brightfutures.org/nutrition/about.html](http://www.brightfutures.org/nutrition/about.html)

Nutrition information for providers

**School Health Guidelines** [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/nutrition/guidelines/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/nutrition/guidelines/index.htm)

"Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Lifelong Healthy Eating"

**Washington State Healthy Youth Survey 2002** [www3.doh.wa.gov/HYS](http://www3.doh.wa.gov/HYS)



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# P R I N T I N G   S P E C I F I C A T I O N S

**Title:**    **What's Up? Information for Adults Who Care About Teens  
"Nutrition" Fact Sheet**

**Size:**    8.5 x 11

**Paper stock:**    80# text white gloss

**Ink color:**    4-color process

**Special instructions:**    2-sided printing with full bleeds

**DOH Pub #:**    910-117